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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN FONMIN COMMENTS ON YAR'ADUA'S HEALTH

REF: ABUJA 1736

Classified By: CDA Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) During a September 8 meeting with Foreign Minister Maduekwe, DRL A/S Kramer asked if President Yar'Adua was back from Saudi Arabia and was any better. Maduekwe said the President had indeed returned to Nigeria on Saturday morning, though the Minister had not seen him personally. He claimed that Yar'Adua's condition is "not life-threatening, otherwise he wouldn't be back."

¶2. (C) Maduekwe remarked that the press speculation about the President's health "has become increasingly unhealthy," and contrasted the "disrespectful" coverage in the Nigerian media with what he said was the more balanced coverage given to the chronic medical ills of past U.S. Presidents, such as President Kennedy's Addison's disease.

¶3. (C) Comment: While admittedly thin gruel, Maduekwe is at least no longer pretending that Yar'Adua is fine, and is inherently acknowledging that the President is chronically ill. Press reports that Yar'Adua would host some sort of public ceremony to decorate the new Service Chiefs with their new ranks have proved untrue. We, and everyone else here, will be watching to see if the President is able to resume any kind of schedule. End comment.
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